

SECTION FIVE – WORK SCHEDULES

POLICY NO: 5.1

SUBJECT: The Learning and Working Environment

I. PURPOSE

To ensure that the educational rotation schedule, including work hours, established for each resident/fellow is consistent with the Program Requirements.

II. RESPONSIBILITY/ REQUIREMENTS

A. Introduction:

SPUH is committed to providing residents/fellows with a sound academic and clinical education carefully planned and balanced between the concerns for patient safety and the well-being of each resident/fellow. Each Postgraduate Program must ensure that the learning objectives of the Postgraduate Program are not compromised by excessive reliance on resident/fellow to fulfill service obligations. Didactic and clinical education must have priority in the allotment of a resident/fellow's time and energy. Duty hour assignments must recognize that SPUH faculty members and residents/fellows are collectively responsible for the safety and welfare of SPUH's patients.

B. Establishment of Educational Rotation Schedules:

Educational rotation schedules (including daily and night work hours, and on-call periods) shall be established on a monthly basis by the Program Director. The work hours of each resident/fellow shall be consistent with the Program Requirements. Although the educational rotation schedule established by the Program Director shall not be excessive, the Program Director shall structure the educational rotation schedule to focus on the educational needs of resident/fellow, the needs of the patients and the continuity of care.

SPUH reserves the right to modify any resident's/fellow's educational rotation schedule in order to accommodate the needs of the Department and SPUH. Any amendments and modifications to the educational rotation schedule shall be communicated to Residents/Fellows as promptly as possible.

The GME Office reviews schedules for compliance with the requirements of the State of New Jersey, the Program Requirements, and this policy. Educational rotation schedules that do not comply with this policy shall be returned to the respective Program Director for revision.

C. Program Requirements:

1. Duty hours are the amount of time resident and fellow physicians spend on clinical experience and education in their specialty or subspecialty, after completion of medical school. “Clinical experience and education” represents the nature of these hours, which include all clinical and academic activities related to a program. This includes patient care (both inpatient and outpatient); administrative duties relative to patient care; the provision for transfer of patient care; time spent in-house during call activities; and scheduled activities, such as conferences. Work hours do not include reading and preparation time spent away from the education site

2. Scope of Work hours:

- a) Work hours must be limited to no more than 80 hours per week, averaged over a four-week period, inclusive of all in-house call activities.
- b) All Residents/Fellows must be provided with one day in seven free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a four-week period, inclusive of call. One day is defined as one continuous 24-hour period free from all clinical, education, and administrative activities.
- c) Adequate time for rest and personal activities must be provided. This should consist of a 10-hour time period free of duty provided between scheduled duty periods.
- d) Duty periods for all levels of residents may be scheduled to a maximum of 24 hours of continuous duty (on-Call) in the hospital. Programs must encourage residents to use alertness management strategies in the context of patient care responsibilities. Strategic napping, especially after 16 hours of continuous duty and between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m., is strongly suggested.

D. On-Call Activities:

- 1. The objective of on-call activities is to provide house staff with continuity of patient care experiences throughout a 24-hour period. Residents/Fellows must have at least 14 hours free of duty after 24 hours of in-house duty. In-house call is defined as those work hours beyond the normal work day when a resident/fellow is required to be immediately available at SPUH.
- 2. The on-call schedule will be tailored to meet the Program Requirements established for each individual Postgraduate Program. SPUH recognizes that in-house call is an integral part of each resident's/fellow's education, and is to be scheduled so as to maximally enhance the educational pursuit.
- 3. In-house call must occur no more frequently than every third night, averaged over a four-week period. On-call rooms are

provided by SPUH for all residents/fellows having on-call responsibilities (see also Policy No. 2.6, Residents/Fellows Work Environment).

4. Continuous on-site duty, including in-house call, must not exceed 24 consecutive hours. Residents/fellows (PGY-2 and above) may remain on duty for up to maximum of four additional hours to ensure an appropriate, effective, and safe transition of care. Residents who have satisfactorily completed the transition of care may, at their discretion, attend an educational conference that occurs during the four hours. If this should occur, the residents/fellows must sleep/rest in the on-call room before driving a vehicle so as to mitigate fatigue. Driving a vehicle while knowingly fatigued would constitute recklessness under vehicular homicide statute (N.J.S.2C:11-5) as defined by “Maggie’s Law”.
5. No new patient (as defined by the Program Requirements) must be accepted after 24 hours of continuous duty. Residents must not be permitted to participate in the care of new patients in any patient care setting during this four-hour period. Residents also must not be assigned to outpatient clinics including continuity clinics, and must not be assigned to participate in a new procedure, such as an elective scheduled surgery, during this four-hour period.
6. At-home call (pager call) is defined as a call taken from Outside of SPUH.
7. Both faculty members and Residents/Fellows must be educated to recognize the signs of fatigue and how to prevent and counteract its potential negative effects.
 - (a) The frequency of at-home call is not subject to the every third night limitation. However, at-home call must not be so frequent as to preclude rest and reasonable personal time for each residents/fellows. Residents/fellows taking at-home call must be provided with one day in seven completely free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a four- week period.
 - (b) When a resident/fellow is called into SPUH from home, the hours spent in-house must be counted toward the 80-hour limit.
 - (c) The Program Director and the faculty must monitor the demands of at-home call and make scheduling adjustments as necessary to mitigate excessive service demands and/or fatigue.

E. Supervision of Residents/Fellows:

All patient care will be supervised by qualified faculty, and each Program Director shall ensure, direct, and document adequate supervision of residents/fellows at all times. Faculty schedules must be structured to provide residents/fellows with continuous supervision, consultation, and feedback. Residents/fellows must be provided with prompt reliable systems of communication and interaction with supervisory physicians and Teaching Staff.

F. Oversight:

Each Postgraduate Program shall have written policies and procedures consistent with the Program Requirements; and shall specifically meet the requirements for residency/fellowship education for work hours and the working environment, as described in this policy and Policy No. 2.6, Residents/Fellows Working Environment. These policies shall be distributed to all Residents/Fellows and SPUH faculty. Back-up support systems shall be made available when patient care responsibilities are unusually difficult or prolonged, or if unexpected circumstances create resident/fellow fatigue sufficient to jeopardize patient care.

G. Work hours Exception:

SPUH shall comply with the “80 hours per week” maximum when establishing each resident/fellow’s educational rotation schedule. However, the ACGME work hour rules allow exceptions in the weekly limit on work hours up to 10 percent or up to a maximum of 88 hours.

1. Work hours Exception Request Protocol:

- Programs must submit the work hour exception request to the GMEC.
- All exceptions requested must be based on a sound educational rationale.
- The GMEC will evaluate, discuss and approve or disapprove the request for work hour exception.

2. In case of disapproval of the work hour request:

- The program director can resubmit the work hours exception request with revised educational rationale to the GMEC.
- The program director can also appeal to the DIO.